

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

February 26, 2004 LR 211

Constitution. It was introduced on January 12 of this year, at that time referred to the Executive Board. The resolution was advanced to General File. I have no amendments, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Chambers, you're recognized to open on LR 211.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you. Mr. President, members of the Legislature, for the record, according to the constitution, the presiding officer of the Legislature is the Lieutenant Governor. A proposition had been put on the ballot in the past to remove the Lieutenant Governor from that position and have the Speaker of the Legislature be the presiding officer. The public voted that proposition down. There is a different set of circumstances now. With all of the hubbub about homeland security and related activities, the Lieutenant Governor no longer is just an extra thumb, or a fifth wheel where you only need four. There are duties that the Lieutenant Governor assumes and discharges which keep that person from presiding over the Legislature for any extended period of time. The Speaker and various members of the Legislature carry out that role, and I think it should be that way all the time. But there is an additional driving force. By the way, the current Lieutenant Governor spoke in favor of this bill, and laid out in some detail the types of activities which the Lieutenant Governor now undertakes to discharge. But with term limits coming in, the Legislature, as a branch of government, has to retain, to the extent that it can with the limited knowledge and experience that the new crew will have, its independence. The executive branch is going to be able to dominate the Legislature anyway, because new people are going to be overawed. There should not be a member of the executive branch presiding over the Legislature. What this proposed constitutional amendment will do is allow the Legislature to function as an independent third branch of government, entirely separate from the other two, which would be the judicial and executive. No other branch of government is presided over by a member of one of the other two branches. The courts would never be required to be dominated by a member of the executive or the legislative branch. So my plea in this instance is to retain for the Legislature, to the extent that such a move can, the